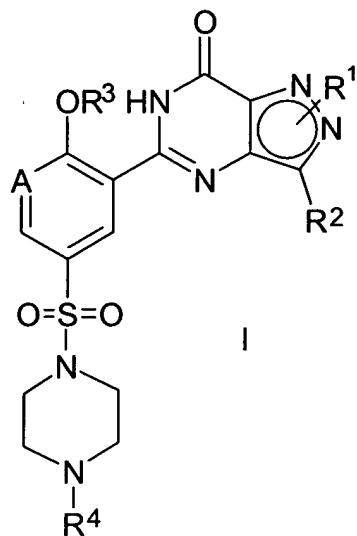


AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

1-17 (cancelled)

18. (Previously presented) A process for the production of a compound of formula I:



wherein

A represents CH or N;

R¹ represents H, lower alkyl (which alkyl group is optionally interrupted by O), Het, alkylHet, aryl or alkylaryl, which latter five groups are all optionally substituted (and/or, in the case of lower alkyl, optionally terminated) by one or more substituents selected from halo, cyano, nitro, lower alkyl, OR⁵, C(O)R⁶, C(O)OR⁷, C(O)NR⁸R⁹, NR^{10a}R^{10b} and SO₂NR^{11a}R^{11b};

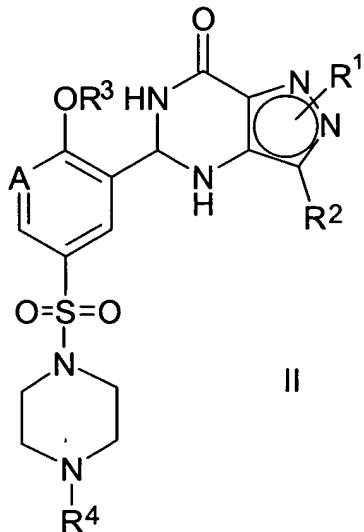
R² and R⁴ independently represent lower alkyl;

R³ represents lower alkyl, which alkyl group is optionally interrupted by oxygen;

Het represents an optionally substituted four- to twelve-membered heterocyclic group, which group contains one or more heteroatoms selected from nitrogen, oxygen and sulfur;

R⁵, R⁶, R⁷, R⁸, R⁹, R^{10a} and R^{11b} independently represent H or lower alkyl;

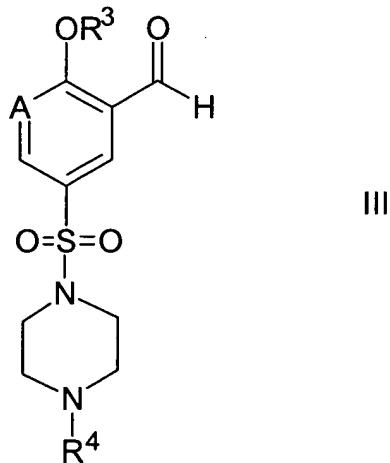
R^{10a} and R^{10b} either independently represent, H or lower alkyl or, together with the nitrogen atom to which they are attached, represent azetidinyl, pyrrolidinyl or piperidinyl, which process comprises the dehydrogenation of a compound of formula II,



II

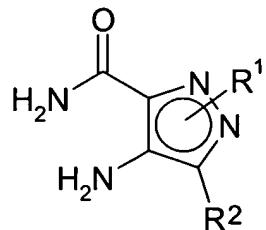
wherein A, R¹, R², R³ and R⁴ are as defined above; and

wherein the compound of formula II is prepared by reaction of a compound of formula III,



III

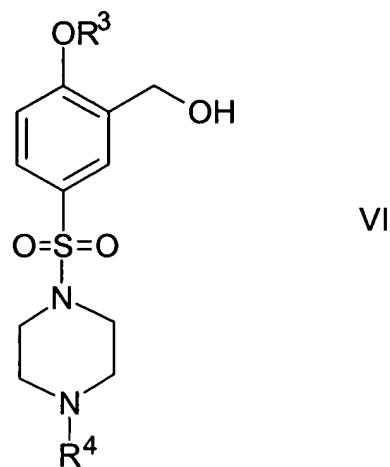
with a compound of formula IV,



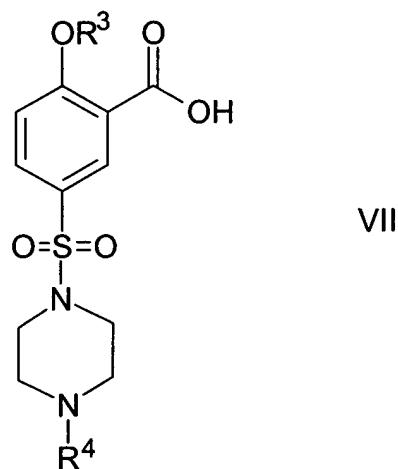
IV

19. (Previously presented) A process as claimed in Claim 18, wherein the compound of formula I is formed in a “one pot” procedure, in which a compound of formula III is reacted with a compound of formula IV, after which the dehydrogenation reaction is performed directly on the intermediate compound of formula II, formed *in situ*.

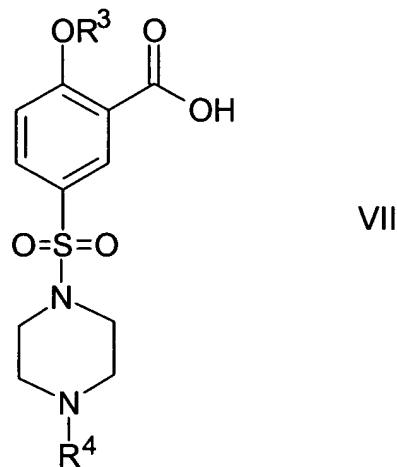
20. (Previously presented) A process as claimed in Claim 18, wherein, in the compound of formula III, A represents CH, and that compound is prepared by oxidation of a compound of formula VI,



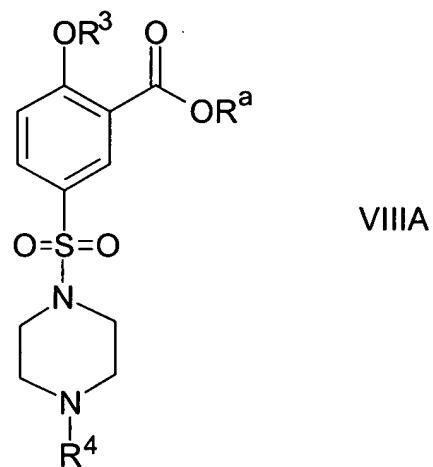
21. (Previously presented) A process as claimed in Claim 20, wherein the compound of formula VI is prepared by reduction of a corresponding carboxylic acid of formula VII,



22. (Previously presented) A process as claimed in Claim 20, wherein the compound of formula VI is prepared by esterification of a compound of formula VII,



to form a compound of formula VIIIA,



wherein

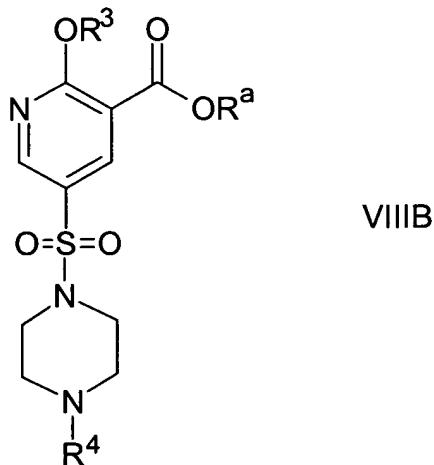
R^a represents lower alkyl; and

R³ represents lower alkyl, which alkyl group is optionally interrupted by oxygen;

R⁴ represents lower alkyl;

followed by reduction of the ester of formula VIIIA.

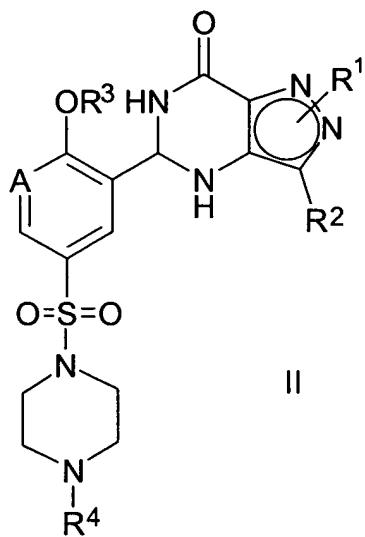
23. (Previously Presented) A process as claimed in Claim 18, wherein, in the compound of formula III, A represents N, and that compound is prepared by reduction of a corresponding compound of formula VIIIB,



VIIIB

wherein R^a is lower alkyl, and R³ and R⁴ are as defined in Claim 18.

24. (Allowed) A compound of formula II,



II

wherein

A represents CH or N;

R¹ represents H, lower alkyl (which alkyl group is optionally interrupted by O), Het, alkylHet, aryl or alkylaryl, which latter five groups are all optionally substituted (and/or, in the case of lower alkyl, optionally terminated) by one or more substituents selected from halo, cyano, nitro, lower alkyl, OR⁵, C(O)R⁶, C(O)OR⁷, C(O)NR⁸R⁹, NR^{10a}R^{10b} and SO₂NR^{11a}R^{11b};

R² and R⁴ independently represent lower alkyl;

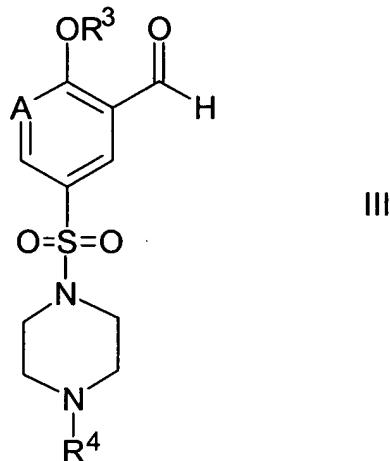
R³ represents lower alkyl, which alkyl group is optionally interrupted by oxygen;

Het represents an optionally substituted four- to twelve-membered heterocyclic group, which group contains one or more heteroatoms selected from nitrogen, oxygen and sulfur;

R^5 , R^6 , R^7 , R^8 , R^9 , R^{11a} and R^{11b} independently represent H or lower alkyl;

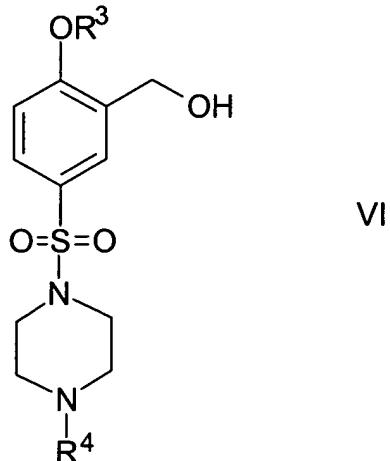
R^{10a} and R^{10b} either independently represent, H or lower alkyl or, together with the nitrogen atom to which they are attached, represent azetidinyl, pyrrolidinyl or piperidinyl.

25. (Allowed) A compound of formula III,



wherein A, R^3 and R^4 are as defined in Claim 24.

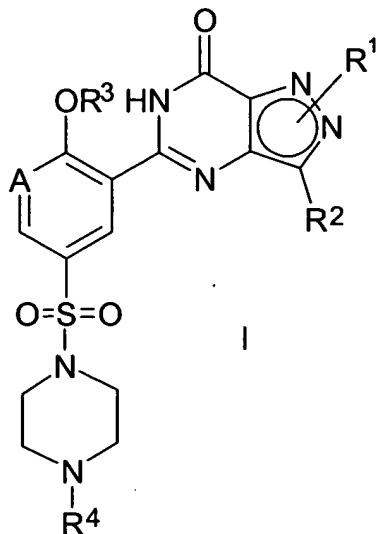
26. (Allowed) A compound of formula VI,



wherein R^3 and R^4 are as defined in Claim 24.

27. (Cancelled).

28. (Previously presented) A process for the production of compounds of formula I:



wherein

A represents CH or N;

R¹ represents H, lower alkyl (which alkyl group is optionally interrupted by O), Het, alkylHet, aryl or alkylaryl, which latter five groups are all optionally substituted (and/or, in the case of lower alkyl, optionally terminated) by one or more substituents selected from halo, cyano, nitro, lower alkyl, OR⁵, C(O)R⁶, C(O)OR⁷, C(O)NR⁸R⁹, NR^{10a}R^{10b} and SO₂NR^{11a}R^{11b};

R² and R⁴ independently represent lower alkyl;

R³ represents lower alkyl, which alkyl group is optionally interrupted by oxygen;

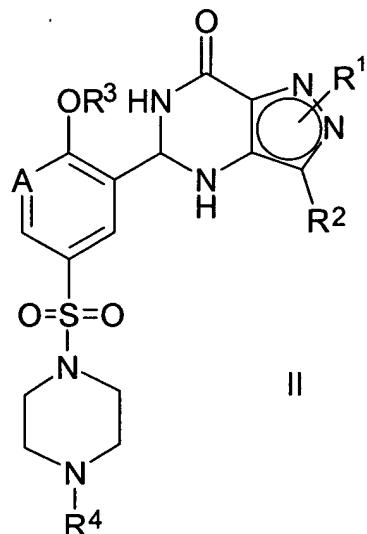
Het represents an optionally substituted four- to twelve-membered heterocyclic group, which group contains one or more heteroatoms selected from nitrogen, oxygen and sulfur;

R⁵, R⁶, R⁷, R⁸, R⁹, R^{11a} and R^{11b} independently represent H or lower alkyl;

R^{10a} and R^{10b} either independently represent, H or lower alkyl or, together with the nitrogen atom to which they are attached, represent azetidinyl, pyrrolidinyl or piperidinyl;

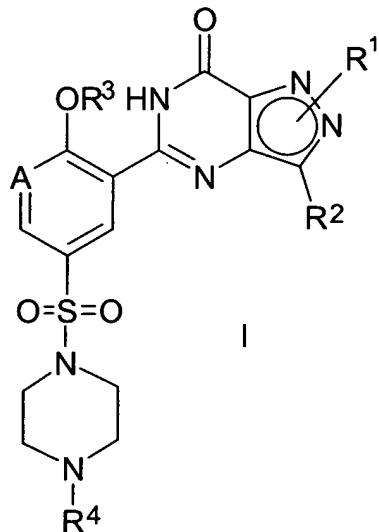
with the proviso that the compound of formula I is not sildenafil;

which process comprises the dehydrogenation of a compound of general formula II,



wherein A, R¹, R², R³ and R⁴ are as defined above.

29. (Previously presented) A process for the production of compounds of formula I:



wherein

A represents CH;

R¹ represents H, lower alkyl (which alkyl group is optionally interrupted by O), Het, alkylHet, aryl or alkylaryl, which latter five groups are all optionally substituted (and/or, in the case of lower alkyl, optionally terminated) by one or more substituents

selected from halo, cyano, nitro, lower alkyl, OR^5 , $C(O)R^6$, $C(O)OR^7$, $C(O)NR^8R^9$, $NR^{10a}R^{10b}$ and $SO_2NR^{11a}R^{11b}$;

R^2 and R^4 independently represent lower alkyl;

R^3 represents lower alkyl, which alkyl group is optionally interrupted by oxygen;

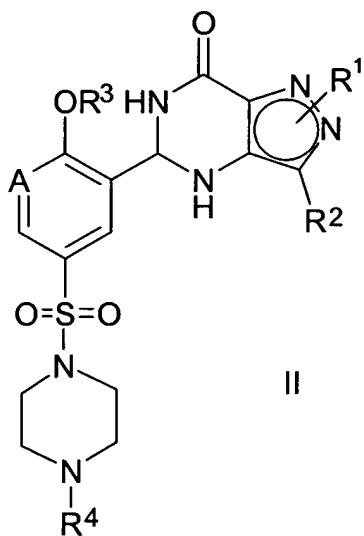
Het represents an optionally substituted four- to twelve-membered heterocyclic group, which group contains one or more heteroatoms selected from nitrogen, oxygen and sulfur;

R^5 , R^6 , R^7 , R^8 , R^9 , R^{11a} and R^{11b} independently represent H or lower alkyl;

R^{10a} and R^{10b} either independently represent, H or lower alkyl or, together with the nitrogen atom to which they are attached, represent azetidinyl, pyrrolidinyl or piperidinyl;

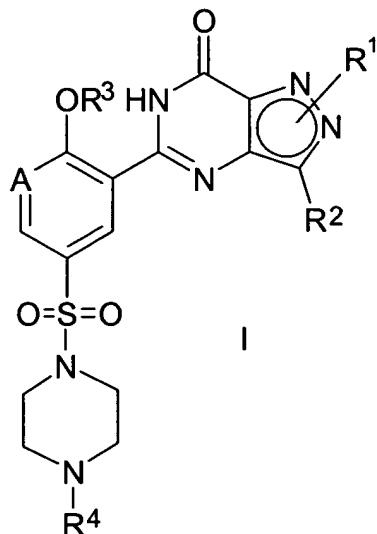
with the proviso that the compound of formula I is not sildenafil;

which process comprises the dehydrogenation of a compound of formula II,



wherein A, R^1 , R^2 , R^3 and R^4 are as defined above.

30. (Previously presented) A process for the production of compounds of formula I:



wherein

A represents N;

R¹ represents H, lower alkyl (which alkyl group is optionally interrupted by O), Het, alkylHet, aryl or alkylaryl, which latter five groups are all optionally substituted (and/or, in the case of lower alkyl, optionally terminated) by one or more substituents selected from halo, cyano, nitro, lower alkyl, OR⁵, C(O)R⁶, C(O)OR⁷, C(O)NR⁸R⁹, NR^{10a}R^{10b} and SO₂NR^{11a}R^{11b};

R² and R⁴ independently represent lower alkyl;

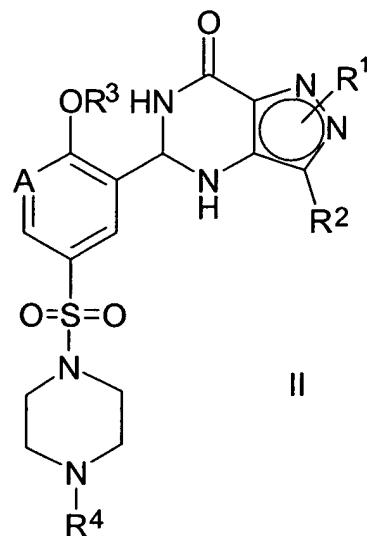
R³ represents lower alkyl, which alkyl group is optionally interrupted by oxygen;

Het represents an optionally substituted four- to twelve-membered heterocyclic group, which group contains one or more heteroatoms selected from nitrogen, oxygen and sulfur;

R⁵, R⁶, R⁷, R⁸, R⁹, R^{11a} and R^{11b} independently represent H or lower alkyl;

R^{10a} and R^{10b} either independently represent, H or lower alkyl or, together with the nitrogen atom to which they are attached, represent azetidinyl, pyrrolidinyl or piperidinyl,

which process comprises the dehydrogenation of a compound of formula II,



wherein A, R¹, R², R³ and R⁴ are as defined above.